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ANTI NAZI LEAGUE

A Critical Examination 1977-81/2 and 1992-95

A Resistance Pamphlet.
Produced by The Colin Roach Centre.



ANL - A Critical examination

**Published by the Colin Roach Centre, 56
Clarence Road, London E5 8HB**

0181 533 7111/0181 533 7116 (fax)

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Much of the material is centred on east London, looking at the struggles against the National Front (NF) in the 1970's and the British National Party in the 80's and 90's.

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Comments, favourable or otherwise, can be sent to the publishers of the pamphlet. The authors are both members of the Colin Roach Centre.

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ANL 1977 - 1981/2 - written by Jim Kelly
ANL 1992 - 1995 - written by Mark McEale

This is a political account of the period 1977 to 1981/2 by an active participant in the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). History is often written by intellectual outsiders, safe in their armchairs, away from the daily struggles being waged by working class people. This account is an attempt to put such a perspective on an important period in the struggle against fascism in the east end of London and in Britain in general.

Introduction

The period of 1977 to 1981 and the history of anti-fascism during this period is mainly the history of the SWP. No other group played as vital a role in stopping the growth of fascism, nationally and especially in East London. (This does not mean ignoring locally based community groups. Hopefully, someone will write an account of them in the near future.)

The period can be broken into three. The first would be the period prior to the counter demonstration against the National Front (NF) at Lewisham in August 1977. This was a period of growth for the fascists, which initially met very little opposition. Media scare stories about Ugandan Asian immigration, the jailing of Robert Relf for advertising his house for sale to an 'English family only', and the strike by the Asian workers at Imperial Typewriters where the white workers scabbed, helped to create a respectability for racist ideas.



By the mid 1970s the NF had adopted the old Mosleyite strategy of building a stronghold in East London from which to build national credibility. Webster, NF deputy leader, obtained large votes in Bethnal Green. Many locals gave passive support. On my council estate, off Globe Rd, NF graffiti and stickers were everywhere. An old Mosleyite on my landing had regular visits from local NF activists. Asian families moving to the estate were attacked, not always by NF members, but by local youths, who supported their ideas. NF members were regulars in local pubs. The Left on the other hand were almost invisible and usually perceived as outsiders.

I joined the SWP in mid 1977, mainly because of their attempts to confront the NF over the previous 12 months. Their attempts to physically stop an NF march at Wood Green and then launching an attack on NF paper sellers at Brick Lane brought them a lot of local publicity. I saw them as the only serious opposition to what was a very much greater threat than today.

This period was one of a very low level of defensive action. The NF were confident, talking of winning Parliamentary seats, polling over 110,000 votes in the '76 GLC Election. In Bethnal Green and Lewisham they began to attack left paper sales and meetings. In the former they attacked individuals, once attempting to sledge. hammer the front door of an SWP members flat.

At Brick Lane the Left was very much on the defensive, only selling papers in the Asian area around Truman's Brewery. The NF sold at 2 or 3 pitches in the market. The CP, with a much larger paper membership played a sectarian role, calling for ineffective, peaceful protests with vicars and bishops. The anti-fascist forces were starting from a much weaker position than we are in today. The individuals and local groups in East London today have a much greater potential than we had prior to August 1977.

One team sells over 500 copies in a morning ...

Street sales boom for *National Front News*



NF members sell *National Front News* at Hoxton Market in the East End.

THE MESSAGE from the East End of London to sellers of the NF paper *National Front News* is: Take **BIG** teams out onto the streets!

The Hackney and Islington Branches of the National Front, with activists from other areas, recently chalked up a great success by selling no less than 574 copies of *NF News* in a single morning at Hoxton Market in the East End.

About 30 activists joined together on this great sales drive — and by a few hours work took the message of the National Front to probably more than a thousand people.

All NF Branches and Regional Organisers should take note of this success. The way to sell our paper is undoubtedly for large numbers of activists from several Branches to combine into big teams and concentrate on one particular area. They can then move on to the area of another Branch for the next sales drive the following weekend — so that the same team eventually covers

a whole Region.

Another bonus of size is as a deterrent for the Communist riff-raff who are prone to violent apoplexy at the sight of NF members selling a patriotic newspaper. At Bolton and Rochdale recently, groups of blacks egged on by communists have tried to prevent the sale of *NF News*. Don't let them get away with it.

The sale of *National Front News* is booming nationwide. Over four thousand copies alone are sold in North and East London, and Leicester Branch of the National Front now sell no less than SIX

THOUSAND copies in through a system of do promotion. Through sale the National Front message more people in Britain ever been achieved by paper since the war.

We realise that r Branches can achieve the local sales, and not a sell the paper *en masse* basis. But they can TR build what is now the nation nationalist paper use now, and remember team can reach the readers.



The Hackney and Islington team — over 500 copies sold

**ANTI-IMMIGRATION
MARCH AND RALLY IN
MAY 1961**

The first big breakthrough came at Lewisham. The SWP had been attacked on their paper sales. John Deason, a Central Committee member, organised stewards groups to defend our activities. This was the beginning of the infamous "squads" specialist groups that were later demonised by the leadership.

The NF tried to take the initiative by organising an "anti-black muggers" march from New Cross to Lewisham. The SWP put all its energy into organising a counter demo. The east London district of the SWP was to be the spearhead of the counter demo. The situation that morning was a mixture of nervous tension and tremendous determination and expectation.

The NF march was surrounded by large numbers of police and as the march turned out of Clifton Rise it was met by a hail of bricks and bottles, but it was managing to continue on its route. At this point none of the comrades with me knew what to do next, including myself! There's no doubt in my mind that the police were still, at this point, in control and disciplined enough to drag the cowering nazi's to their destination.

It was at this point that the whole situation was transformed, one act of individual courage by Peter Chapell; who launched himself into the front of the march. The sight of the Union Jacks shooting into the air, nazis scattering broke the impasse. Chapell was quickly followed by a small group of his mates.

Within seconds our group of SWP members linked arms and moved across the road to support Chapell and his friends. We broke the march just behind the 'Honour Guard.' There followed a few minutes of vicious fighting, the fascists were left battered and bruised, many were clearly terrified of what had just taken place. The march disintegrated, with fascists running around in blind panic. Most ran away, a few stood their ground and got overwhelmed by the sheer weight of anti-fascists. These , included many local Afro-Caribbean's who had turned out.

This victory changed the momentum of the struggle at a national level and it produced a tremendous feeling of elation on the part of the anti-fascists involved. Without the political

commitment of Peter Chapell the next few years would have been a lot harder and dangerous.

The next day at Brick Lane in Bethnal Green we took the initiative and moved our paper sellers up into the market, meeting only verbal resistance from the nazi's who turned up. I would estimate that we sold around 400 copies of 'Socialist Worker.' Jim Nicholl, a central committee member was interviewed on the front cover of the 'News of the World' in which he said that the SWP 'had done it and would do it again.'

Second period--ANL Mk. 1

The political momentum of the Lewisham victory led within a short space of time to the launch of the ANL . The image of aggressive, confrontational street politics which the SWP leadership encouraged led to a massive influx of young working class males and females.

These new recruits found it difficult to relate to the older, more conservative middle class people who had been party members since their student days. Many left because of the arrogance and political snobbery of these self-proclaimed professional revolutionaries. Others began to organise with experienced working class militants and began to develop a more aggressive anti-fascist agenda. This meant we cleared the fascists off the streets of East London, attacking paper sales and members.

This new offensive tactic increasingly worried the SWP leadership. A split developed between the leaderships empty rhetoric and reality.

In fact, the launch of the ANL signalled a move to the right by the SWP leadership, who increasingly developed strategy of working with pop stars, actors and actresses and mainstream politicians, especially those Labour politicians who were under

electoral pressure from the NF who were winning the support of a minority of white working class voters.

At the same time the anti-fascist militants were moving in the opposite direction, organising independently of the SWP and developing national links with other anti-fascist groups similar to our own. Contrary to the later lies of the SWP leadership most of us were also active trades unionists or were involved with other working class organisations. There was a high proportion of women involved.

This split had become apparent by the time of the second ANL Carnival which was planned for Brixton in September 1978, the first had been at Victoria Park.

When it was announced the NF said they were going to hold a march to Brick Lane on the same day. We argued for the carnival to be cancelled and to defend Brick Lane. The SWP leadership argued that only a small number of local people should go along to oppose the NF. The carnival went ahead, we went to Brick Lane and at about 1.30pm we realised that the NF were going to bring quite a few people. We organised for a message to be sent to the carnival organisers in Brixton - Gerry F who was one of the chief organisers and a leading SWP member was asked to make a statement asking for support. He refused and got up and said things were OK in the Brick Lane area. It was a disgrace.

The NF march was directed by the police into Curtain Road, off Great Eastern Street and the NF held a rally. This was very lucky, especially for us! We had about 100 people, a mixture of anarchists and the SWP. The local Asian Youth had mobilised and were hanging around, I have no doubt that they would have fought the NF.

This was the first SWP public move to distance themselves from aggressive, confrontational anti-fascism into peaceful, almost pacifist anti-fascism. At the time we didn't really recognise what was happening - we were prepared to accept that a mistake had been made. We learnt quickly as the SWP

leadership moved to have our branch, the Clapton branch in Hackney, closed down.

We argued against the politics of the ANL, as we realised that this was an attempt to cuddle closer to Labour politicians and pacifists. The middle classes were pulling the SWP/ANL away from confrontation and class politics - they succeeded!

This period of rightward political drift lasted until the 1979 election campaign. During this 6 month period there was a subtle shift of tactics. Recruitment was the new priority. The leadership privately attempted to play down anti-fascist activity, or at least to channel it into safer controllable forms. They were finding it increasingly difficult to control the leap forward of the previous 18 months.

Working class militants were also joining from other SWP fronts such as 'The Right To Work Campaign' and the rank and file union groups. This was bound to create organisational problems. Instead of developing structures to cope they turned to old fashioned Stalinism. It was increasingly evident that there was a party within a party with its own agenda -- sect building.

The problem for these conservative elements at the top was that the new members were no longer middle class students, easily manipulated and willing to bow the forelock to their intellectual peers, but no nonsense tough people with experience of the real world.. The unreal world which SWP leader Tony Cliff and his religious disciples had created was beginning to shake at its rickety foundations.

The momentum of events took on its own logic. Many new members were confident street fighters and continued to tighten the screw on the reeling fascists. By now many young people were openly wearing ANL badges and shirts. Rock Against Racism played a vital role, many punk and ska bands, with skinhead followings joined.

Nazi skins attempted to stop this process by smashing up gigs. This tactic was working. A tour by young multi-racial ska bands, The Two-Tone Tour, with popular groups like Selector,

was increasingly attacked. This violence was met head on when members and supporters of Hatfield SWP/ANL confronted the nazis at a two-tone gig at Hatfield poly. The fighting was serious with bad injuries on both sides but the nazi's lost heavily. This provoked a big debate in the music press , forcing many people to take sides. The nazi attacks immediately stopped.

This pattern of events was also unfolding elsewhere. We were soon to learn south east, north west , Islington, and outer east London were being "infected". So too were Hatfield and Manchester. Alarm bells rang within the party bureaucracy.

The 1979 election was very violent. This reached its climax in the weekend before the election night. We were involved in numerous counter demonstrations that weekend.

The party leadership was swept along by the sheer enthusiasm of the party rank and file and the support of young people ,black and white , prepared to fight the fascists. Any differences were temporarily ignored.

There was a relatively successful attempt to kick the NF off their pitch at the top of Brick Lane on the Sunday. Local NF leader Derrick Day and his Hoxton thugs were routed, with Day running and attempting to hide under a parked lorry. Unfortunately the fat bastard couldn't fit and attempts by our comrades to kick him under were not appreciated by Derrick. Not even a thank you!

Southall

Monday was the big fixture for both sides .The NF had organised a meeting at Southall town hall. There was obviously going to be massive resistance from the local Asian community. We had plans to disrupt the meeting by breaking through a building behind the town hall and occupying it. We were well organised with large smoke flares and planned diversions. Unfortunately the Police were more than ready for us. A

political decision had obviously been taken to smash the anti fascist movement that night at Southall.

At a prepared signal we attempted to smash our way through the Police, the flares went off and the push started. Almost immediately the Police counter attacked , with mobile SPG units on the scene in minutes. All hell broke loose with the SPG hitting out at anyone. Everywhere there were little street battles. Police units lost their "command and control" structures.

I remember on one occasion running with a group of around 40 people being chased by a group of around 10 cops. We entered a local park, most of the pursuing cops gave up the chase for some reason except for 2 , who must have been carried away. One local youth asked why 40 of us were running away from 2 cops! We stopped and so did our pursuers, one stood his ground and was beaten and lost his shield and truncheon. We had ourselves a prisoner. Some of the other cops now caught up. They had arrested an Asian man. We opened negotiations and organised a prisoner swap!

The only group to keep its discipline that night was the SPG. They obviously had orders to inflict whatever damage they chose on the counter demonstrators. They were attacking anyone, it was obvious from the injuries received by people that night that the majority of blows were aimed at the head. People were attacked as they lay unconscious on the ground. By the end of the evening it was a not so simple task of self preservation.

The next morning I heard the tragic news that Blair Peach had been murdered. Blair was a teacher in Tower Hamlets, an SWP member, and a very good comrade. His death and the injuries deliberately inflicted on SWP members that night had a profound effect on the party. Many comrades were shattered. The last NF meeting of the election was at East Ham Town Hall on the Wednesday. The turn out at the counter demo was very small, around 150/200 people. This was the beginning of the

policy of retreat from militant anti fascism, the SWP leadership lost its nerve.

The third period - retreat from struggle

An interesting event took place a few weeks after Blairs funeral which sheds a little light on the leaderships thinking. Some local NF sympathisers threatened a comrades wife, who worked as a barmaid in a pub in Bethnal Green. We decided to meet this threat head on the following Saturday night. We met in the racists local pub to sort the matter out. Fortunately for them they did not show, we then found out they were drinking in The Rose And Crown in Cambridge Heath Road. We decided to pay it a visit in the course of which the pub was trashed.

After the following weeks branch meeting I was informed by a college lecturer Colin Sparks, that things were getting out of control. The pub was situated around the corner from the SWP printshop and was used by various nonentities on the Central Committee. As I remember his words were "Its too close to home" meaning to the CC, not the printworks!

The SWP leadership was preparing the ground for retreat.

The events during the election campaign were to be the last as far as the leadership were concerned. Things had clearly moved out of their control under pressure from a significant number of working class militants. In essence the SWP was still a student sect and the leadership did not like the idea of not being in total control.

There was a real opportunity at this point for the party to grow. This would have entailed the development of genuine democratic structures coupled with educating a new working class cadre. The existing leadership were not prepared to open the party up to these new forces. They decided instead to revert to the old sectarian Stalinist methods , in order to stay as a big

fish in a little pool. .Soon events in Manchester and Islington were to show this new policy change.

After their crushing defeat at the election the NF turned once more to street violence. In many areas their organisation split into warring factions. In Islington this brought the violent , criminal faction to the fore. Without the need for electoral respectability they were prepared to fight hard to defend one of their last regular paper sales at Chapel market. The local group saw this as their patch and they did in fact have a good deal of support on the local estates such as The Packington .

What they did not realise was the courage and determination of local anti fascists like Anna S, Pete G ,and other members of the Islington ANL. These people were not prepared to turn their backs on the struggle, simply because it was becoming increasingly violent or because the SWP leadership had lost its nerve. In fact most of these comrades realised the necessity of finishing what had been started 5 years previously. The pressure on the fascists had to be kept up, any let up would have allowed them to regroup.

In a simple choice between loyalty to the SWP or loyalty to our class the choice was clear. We chose to fight on . Chapel Market became a violent battle ground on Saturday and Sunday morning. Support for the struggle came from many different groups and individuals with the notable exception of the SWP.

The few SWP members that turned up were soon threatened with expulsion. Even worse the local SWP leadership began a campaign of rumour mongering, accusing the Islington ANL organiser of being mentally unstable. Local anti fascists were labelled racists(!). Even the women in our group were called macho!!

This method of lies and deceit was used instead of open and honest debate on the changing tactics needed to meet this more sinister and ugly new phase of the struggle.

The fighting at the Market soon spread to the local area including pubs. We drank at a pub in the Liverpool road, which

served bad beer, but served it late and to the sound of great Irish rebel songs.

Soon a large group of nazi skins moved into the pub along the road. This challenge was quickly dealt with by a large group of comrades from Hertfordshire, as was a later attempt to take-over a pub at Islington Green by local nazis. This inability to organise even in their "own" areas was having a demoralising effect on their morale, and their public violence was divorcing them from their periphery.

We now had a core of experienced activists capable of beating the fascists at their own game if necessary. The pitch at Chapel Market was held by the left, the fascists could not dislodge us. We began to take the offensive. The commitment and courage shown by the comrades broke the spirit of many of the fascists.

The hard core turned to terrorism. Anna S. had her home petrol bombed, this was the climax to years of physical attacks on Anna, each attack only strengthening her resolve. The infighting in the NF now served to weaken our opponents. The local nazis had failed - we had beaten them at their own game. An incident between Martin Webster and a young male fascist at a party led to very serious infighting. Webster was hunted down by his former allies. Others turned their attention to robbing building societies and pushing drugs. Our pressure was destroying their remaining organisation in north-east London.

By this time the SWP had expelled many of their best anti-fascists. Two small incidents, one at the Manchester Carnival and another at Skegness, the annual SWP jamboree, were used by the leadership in the most underhand and deceitful manner. Many of our comrades had to go through the farce of defending themselves in front of a Control Commission. This aptly named body would make a Kangaroo Court appear just and objective. It operates simply as a rubber stamp for the clique with the majority shareholding on the Central Committee.

Fascist violence in east and north London developed as we had argued. Racial attacks, firebombings, and the occasional murder replaced the electoral respectability of the period prior to April 1979. The SWP turned its back on the struggles of black and Asian workers in the 1980s. Unfortunately we never had the resources necessary to replace those of the SWP. Yet groups like Red Action and Anti Fascist Action did contain many of the best comrades from this period.

Looking back at this period, the only conclusion I have come to is that the anti-fascist struggle, in which rank and file SWP members played such a prominent part increasingly became a mere membership recruitment campaign. We were cynically used and then conveniently dumped. The SWP leadership became trapped by its own rhetoric and was swept along by events. At the first opportunity they opted for the certainty and safety of sectarian politics.

At the same time they did provide a focus for many working class activists, if only for a brief period.

The struggle against the fascists has a long and proud history in east London. The above is a descriptive account of one chapter. The political violence we were forced to employ was not enjoyable. It was viewed as a necessary evil. Its role was to demoralise the enemy and to create a space for socialists and anti-racists to work in. In both areas we were very successful.

We also believed that the SWP had the politics to build a socialist alternative with real credibility. In this we were cruelly let down.

This was the greatest failing of the period. We were not allowed to build on our street success by extending the fight to the electoral arena. Like to-day we called for a vote for Labour. This held no appeal for many people in Tower Hamlets, where the Labour Party has a reputation for elitism and corruption. Paul Beasley, the Labour leader in the mid 70s was a director of the London Docklands Development Corporation. and was on

the board of at least 2 local businesses. Being part of the ruling Labour faction on the council has always been a good career move.

Calling for a vote for Labour in parts of east London, by the left, can help the fascists allowing them to pose as the only genuine "radical" alternative to Labour. At least the Communist Party in the 30s built on the anti Mosley street work by putting forward a credible electoral alternative. This played no small part in getting a Communist MP, Phil Piratin elected for Mile End in 1945.

Mixing militant anti BNP rhetoric with calls for a Labour vote will leave the left as noisy, irrelevant, footsoldiers for "new" Labour. It will also rob us of the option of developing our own agenda leaving us instead to react to the BNPs.

Jack Straw promised the people of The Isle Of Dogs 5,000 new council homes at the last by-election. Where are they? The left told people to vote for these liars. Where does that leave the left? How many will be built before the next election? The election of an opportunist gang of yuppies and local fly-boys has not solved any of the problems facing all the communities of the east-end. How could it?

Confronting the BNP physically is one side of the coin, in many ways building a political base in east London will be an even harder task. This was the greatest failing of our tactics in the 70s. This failure allowed the BNP to re-emerge. Despite its successes, the anti-fascist politics of the 70s can not provide all the answers for to-day. A new working class agenda is urgently needed.

ANL Mark 2

This section has been written by a trade unionist who has been active in the struggle against fascism for many years. In particular he has been involved in fighting against fascism in east London for the last 7 years, first as a member of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) and later in the Colin Roach Centre.

Introduction

On November 10th 1991 AFA held a march in Tower Hamlets of five thousand people. Members of the BNP stayed away from the event. The march did not attract many members of the Asian community, but it was still an impressive show of strength. A disturbance led to riot police threatening to attack the march, but efficient stewarding prevented confrontation.

Around 25% of the demonstration were SWP members. Earlier in the day, local SWP activists had been interviewed on local radio and discussed the event as if they had organised it.

On the same weekend the SWP held their annual conference. This also took place in Tower Hamlets with over 600 delegates from branches across the country. Discussion centred on a small number of prepared papers, including the longest from the SWP Central Committee (CC) on 'Racism in Britain.' It stated that "throughout Europe the whole question of refugees and immigration have moved to the centre stage of politics." The SWP CC had no intention of moving this 'whole question' to 'the centre stage' of the party and offered the view that "up to now Labour have been taking quite a good line on the refugees." As Labour were in their 13th year in opposition and have a disgraceful record on immigration controls and racism this meant very little. An SWP co-ordinated national struggle against immigration controls was not suggested.

BEATING THE FASCISTS



In old East End tradition

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS

Assemble 1:00 p.m., Sunday 10th November
Aldgate East tube, Whitechapel High Street, London E1

anti-fascist action

The rest of the SWP CC's paper was a record of SWP 'successes' against the BNP, criticism of other non-SWP anti-racist/fascist initiatives and a critical analysis of black nationalism. The ANL is mentioned once.

The paper also stated that 1991 had witnessed a "generalised increase in the level of racism" and "that for the first time in over a decade we are facing a specific fascist group." There are 2 things to be said about this. Firstly, was 1991 unique? This does not appear to be the case, it was a year when racism became increasingly respectable. It is trend which has continued throughout the 1990s.

Secondly, how did a specific fascist group emerge and how come the SWP CC had not spotted the possibility in previous years? Why was it that the party which repeatedly stated that the ANL successes between 1977 and 1981/2 had made fascism "no longer a threat" was now being forced to admit that they were wrong (although, of course, they never used such words). It was as if the BNP had emerged from nowhere.

This analysis suited the SWP leadership as it justified their previous work, or lack of it, in anti-fascist struggles. By presenting the BNP's growth as sudden it meant that an immediate response from the SWP may be needed. It also meant that the experiences of those involved in fighting fascism in the period after the closure of the ANL could be dismissed. As such, it meant that the SWP's record of refusing to fight alongside AFA in east London, against the BNP, during the period 1985 - 1991 was given official sanction.

In fact, the real world showed that the BNP's increased support in 1991 was the product of a steady growth in fascism internationally and the organisation's patient work over many years. We shall look at both below.

Fascist support grows

Starting from the mid 1980s up to 1991 there was a significant growth in fascist activity in Europe, with Jean Marie Le Pen and the Front National captured millions of middle and working class votes in France, the MSI extending its own base of support in Italy and the Republikaner Party in Germany enjoying a resurgence of support following the collapse of the Berlin Wall in the late 1980s.

For a party such as the SWP, with a claim to be internationalists, this should have alerted them to the need to be actively involved in the struggle against fascism in Britain, if only on the basis that the countries and peoples which make up Britain were likely to be affected by a movement which was emerging throughout the entire capitalist system.

In addition, the local election results in Tower Hamlets for the BNP had demonstrated increasing support for their politics of hatred and racism. In the St Peter's Ward local election in 1990, the BNP received 12.8% of the vote in an area where approximately 50% of the local population was black. They thus gained 25% of the white vote. They had gained less spectacular votes in other wards, but the trend was definitely upwards.

Racial attacks multiply

Election results, of course, only tell one part of the story, the period also marked a noticeable increase in reported racial incidents and attacks. The Runnymede Trust had estimated in 1985 that 70,000 racial incidents and attacks had occurred. Clearly, the majority of these attacks are not carried out by fascists, never mind BNP or National Front members, but this still does not make such activities any less palatable as the

majority involve black working class members being attacked by their white counterparts.

The first priority in such a situation is to work alongside those under attack, supporting and recognising the principle of self-defence. This can only be one part. It is necessary to win over those doing the attacks to the side of anti-racism and anti-fascism, by focusing on those who benefit most from racism (of course, some sections of the white working class do benefit from racism) and fascism - the employers and their system. By creating the conditions for unity in struggle, a way is paved to creating a better society for all, black and white.

By ignoring the rise of fascism, the massive increase in racist attacks and by failing to develop a strategy to win over racists and fascists, the SWP failed as an organisation to address the problems facing working class people. The 1991 SWP conference maintained the failure as the fascists strove to extend their base of support in England, Scotland and Wales. They also attempted to build stronger links with the loyalists in N. Ireland.

Fascism and loyalism

As an aside, the authors view on the relationship between fascism and loyalism in Northern Ireland is that the loyalists are not fascists, only because it is not in their strategic, or, material, interests to be so. Struck as they are on relying on the interests of British imperialism, they could, and would be quickly won to fascism if a credible electoral fascist movement in Britain emerged. The SWP have failed to grasp what is elementary Marxism when analysing loyalism - that the loyalists can't declare themselves fascist as it would be the end of them, cutting them off from the trade union and labour movement support they currently enjoy.

In addition, the SWP's analysis of the historical dimensions of fascism has always seen it as originating from Italy

(Mussolini and the MSI) or Germany, (Hitler and the Nazis). In fact, there is a strong case to argue that fascism was a British invention in the early part of the 20th century, when the loyalist ruling class in Ireland strove to prevent an independent Ireland emerging, based on a secular state.

ANL and ARA leadership clash

It could therefore only be expressed as surprising that less than 2 months after the SWP conference, the Anti-Nazi League was (re) launched in a blaze of publicity at the House of Commons in January 1992. At the start there were problems. The same month saw the launch of the Anti-Racist Alliance (ARA), with Thames Television reporter Marc Wadsworth bringing together a number of MPs, trade union bureaucrats and known figures from the anti-racist black led groupings. Whilst proclaiming the values of black leadership, it included figures such as Ken Livingstone on their executive committee and required the financial support of the trade union hierarchies, which are themselves dominated by institutionalised racism.

The leaders of ARA were furious with the SWP and the ANL figureheads such as Bernie Grant MP and Peter Hain MP. The ANL leadership proposed a compromise whereby ARA leaders would be given positions on the ANL executive committee. Clearly, even at the beginning it was never proposed to make the ANL a democratic organisation, whereby those who joined would be given the opportunity to elect people to various positions.

Neither were the ANL leaders interested in uniting with ARA on the basis of a common programme of work or aims. Their bureaucratic response to the problems of different people and groups seeking to establish themselves as the leaders of the anti-racist/fascist struggle was rejected by the ARA leadership,

who failed to force the SWP into abandoning the ANL and link up under the ARA banner.

The political differences which emerged were generally on the lines of black leadership (ARA) versus 'we did it before in the 1970s' (SWP/ANL). In fact as history has shown, both projects have been of little use in the struggle against racism and fascism and in some areas have helped in its growth.

It is not clear who took the decision to re-launch the ANL. The SWP CC did agree to its re-launch but this appears to have happened after the leader of the SWP, Tony Cliff, announced it at a SWP branch meeting in Stoke Newington, Hackney. It seems that Cliff discussed the idea informally with a very small number of close colleagues (Cliff, was once quoted as saying that on really important decisions he would consult with only 2 other people in the SWP, Duncan Hallas being one) and then he decided it should be re-launched.

Whatever the exact circumstances, it is a fact that less than 2 months after their national conference at which no discussion or vote was taken on launching the ANL, the SWP leadership were sitting in the House of Commons with Labour MPs proclaiming the virtues of ANL mark 2.

With increasing reports of attacks on SWP members by fascists there were some pressures on the SWP central committee to act. At the same time, the demise of the Communist Party had led to a recognition by some within the organisation that they had inherited the mantle of 'leadership.' However, they had no basis on which to 'lead' and as the ANL represented probably the peak of their limited achievements, the SWP chose the soft option. It meant a debate amongst the membership on other alternatives could be ignored and the reality was that previous initiatives in other areas, such as the 'Time to Go' campaign around Ireland in 1988-9, had failed miserably.

The other factors in this were AFA's relative success in mobilising a number of young people, including from within the

ranks of the SWP itself. In addition in December 1991 a crowd of almost 1,000 to Charing Cross to protest outside the hotel of French Front National leader Jean Marie Le Pen. Many young people turned out. The re-launch of the ANL thus became an attractive prospect to the SWP leadership.

Anti-Fascist Action

By creating their own organisation, staffed by their appointed people, the SWP and their colleagues on the left of the Labour Party could avoid having to join AFA. This would have meant linking up with many of the people they had expelled in 1980-82, who had re-formed themselves in Red Action (RA). With RA being the key group in AFA, especially in London, the SWP leadership could not have stomached having the same tussles as they had had with militant anti-fascists in previous times, especially as the latter were now politically more experienced.

Just as importantly, by committing their members to join AFA, the SWP would have been committing themselves to physically fighting fascism. This was a prospect that none of their leaders could stomach and certainly could not plan. The ANL was launched to avoid this and it has exclusively concentrated on tackling fascism ideologically. Doomed to fail 3 and 1/2 years ago, it is even less relevant today when the fascists have developed Combat 18 and are slowly re-vitalising the 'Blood and Honour' music network.

The SWP in east London had, even before the launch of the ANL, miserably failed the physical test on many occasions. During the 1990 local elections in Bethnal Green, the BNP held a Saturday afternoon public meeting in Weavers Field School. The SWP ignored approaches from AFA to work together and held a picket outside the school. The police put the SWP into a nearby field, behind a spiked fence.

Meanwhile AFA took over two local pubs and when a gang of BNP members walked past, around 40 joined the police escort. There were cries of 'fascist scum off our streets' as AFA and the BNP approached the school. A short and violent struggle took place, with leading fascist Tony Lecomber getting bottled by a leading RA member, resulting in many anti-fascists getting arrested. The fascists were shoved or ran into the school, many were badly shaken.

Soon after a much larger group of fascists came running up the road and began shouting about getting 'stuck-in' to the remaining AFA members. Led by Phil Edwards, a well-known BNP figure, they ran at AFA who stood their ground and (thankfully, I can tell you!) the fascists stopped about 5 to 6 yards away and resorted to hurling verbal abuse. The police pushed them into the school, where a 90 minute rally took place.

During the confrontation the SWP organisers and members made no attempt to join up with the AFA members, even when the latter's number had been severely depleted by the earlier arrests. I can recall the horror on some SWP members faces at the sight of the violence they had witnessed.

A wave of media interest heralded the launch of the ANL mark 2 and thousands of leaflets and posters reminded those who had missed it. Fascism became the key issue for SWP members. Young people with hardly any previous record of involvement became professed experts, almost overnight, about how to defeat fascism. Different workplace groups were set up, with 'Council workers against the Nazis' being the strongest.

Waterloo 1992

In September 1992 the Blood and Honour music network announced that it intended to host a major gig involving Skrewdriver and six other fascist bands. Around 1,500 fascists and racists were expected, and for security reasons the venue

was to be revealed only on arrival at Waterloo Station. AFA immediately called for anti-fascists to rally at Waterloo at 4pm, one hour before the majority of fascists were anticipated to arrive. 'Blood and Honour' stewards were supposed to make the area safe and ensure that 'music-lovers' could be transported to the pre-arranged venue.

Earlier in the day, the ANL held a demo in south-east London, attracting about 1,000. This standard activity of chanting, leaflet distribution and paper selling attracted no opposition from the fascists. AFA leafleted the demo and requested support for the later event.

AFA were able to mobilise over 1,000 anti-fascists to Waterloo and AFA security stewards were able to remove, at an early stage, fascists drinking in the bars on Waterloo Station. Fascist stewards were noticeable by their absence. Many anarchists turned out as well as members of the Turkish Revolutionary group, Dev-Sol, who even brought their children. Their leader was to later remark that he hadn't realised there was a difference between AFA and the ANL and he thought Waterloo would be a re-run of the passive anti-fascist/nazi activities he had attended with the ANL.

In the events that followed, the fascists' plans were severely dented. The large majority were scattered, a leading Millwall football gang leader suffered a heart attack, Waterloo Station and the area's transport system was brought to a halt, and only by finally surrounding and imprisoning the main AFA group, were the police able to control the situation, four hours after it started. The fascists did manage to hold a much smaller gig at which trouble broke out over who was to blame for the fiasco.

The SWP/ANL brought at most, 100 to Waterloo and they stayed out of harm's way, preferring to stand close to the police rather than get stuck in to the fascists. This however, did not stop them lying about events at Waterloo by listing it as one of their successes in the programme they produced for the massive (200,000) ANL carnival in south London in 1994.

RED ACTION

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BATTLE FOR WATERLOO

THE UNTOLD STORY!

Saturday 12 September, the night in Britain suffered its ugliest public humiliation for years in what has become the "Battle of Waterloo". A so-nazi music group, Blood 'n' Guts, publicly announced they were holding a gig in London. Additionally, the British National Party and the National Socialist Party were chosen as the redirection. The gig was sponsored by a stream promoter (rumoured to be Kurd).

his is brilliant!...it's enough to have been criticised by Red on!"

is designed by the far-right as a down, thereafter having cleared any of any tangible resistance, would be made to cash in on it and Honour's commercial and potential. Significantly, despite appearing as far as Newcastle and Edinburgh, and reports of public distribution in Europe, the anti-fascist movement refused to be "prodded".

th less than two weeks to go, the i-Nazi League announced they were holding a march in Thornton athl. With less than a week to go, the far-right action picked up the untold. At a rain-soaked Unity rally in Hackney, thousands of fascists were alerted to the significance of the event by live performers. The Bangers and 15,000 distributed leaflets. Between 1,200 and 400 people answered the call.



A group of troops, looking to arrange their outfit, in front of Waterloo.

On Thursday 10 September, two days before the gig was due to go ahead, AFA issued a press release in which spokesman, Eamonn Kent, promised maximum disruption. He said: "It will be done peacefully if we are allowed, but we are undaunted by the prospect of physical confrontation and in the end it may well be like the Battle of Waterloo." It was to prove a prophecy of some substance.

Casualties
At the high point of the Battle, no less than five central London stations, including Charing Cross and Waterloo, were closed. In addition, 200 right-wingers, herded by police onto Waterloo Bridge for safety, brought traffic to a standstill for over an hour. There were 44 arrests in total, mainly anti-fascists, with almost as many "casualties", mainly fascists, needing hospital treatment. A police officer quoted in the News of

the World the next day described it as: "Custer's last stand!" An AFA press release on the same day claimed victory: "Waterloo was a tactical battle between us and the far-right, us and the police. Yesterday we won. Once the police were forced to close the station through weight of numbers we knew we were in control."

The Battle for Waterloo
was a watershed in the struggle between the forces of the left and the right throughout Europe... It's a battle for control of the streets... The tactics favoured by the Anti-Nazi League and other liberal anti-racist groups have been eclipsed by yesterday's victory.

and the right throughout Europe... It's a battle for control of the streets... The tactics favoured by the Anti-Nazi League and other liberal anti-racist groups have been eclipsed by yesterday's victory.

THE INSIDE STORY

When the first sightings of the posters proclaiming "Screwdriver Back in London" were reported five weeks prior to the event, AFA organisers responded to them with scepticism. The principal reason was that Screwdriver had not even attempted to play in London for over three years. Moreover, they had never previously advertised their gigs publicly.

On the last occasion such a project was mounted on 27 May 1989, their principle pre-occupation was to keep the event hush-hush. It was ticketed only with applications to be made by post. Twelve hundred tickets were sold throughout Europe in advance.

The promise made by Blood and Honour was "Money back if not delighted". Due entirely to the efforts of AFA, only 300 got in. Blood and Honour collapsed. So, justifiably wary of an elaborate hoax, AFA hesitated in calling the counter-demonstration while others in the anti-racist movement did so for less acceptable reasons.

Boasted

On Friday 11 September, Neil Parish, a Blood and Honour organiser, told the media he would be available for interviews on the concourse at

Waterloo at 4.30pm. Asked a reporter from Sky News how I would find him, he boasted I expected between 1,000 and 2,000. "You'll have no trouble finding 4.30pm was the time AFA was scheduled to arrive."

At 3.20pm, in a departure from its own agenda, 150 security stewards materialised on the concourse at Waterloo. By 3.25pm the first three "boogymen" had probably resigned the selves to spending the night in casual so began the Battle for Waterloo.

Initially taken by surprise, the police began the arduous task of trying to "tonguish" the "politically motivated" from the genuine travellers. Huge swarms across the station herded both a fascists and, possibly even more rampant, fascists towards the exits.

A copper screamed, "If you run, we're fucking running with you!"

Once outside, the fascists were inevitably attacked. When the police rushed out to intervene, they left a "thin blue line" through which anti-fascists artfully filtered. This game of cat and mouse continued for an hour.

AFA's objective at this stage was to seek physical confrontation with scattered bands of fascists beg to congregate outside, but to physically occupy the station concourse. As long as we "held" the station would be the natural rallying point for our own forces while automatic rendering it useless as a redire point for the opposition.

By 5pm, there were estimates

Continued on back p

EUSTON: AFA'S DOUBLE WHAMMY!

A massive police operation was needed to allow the British National Party to hold their annual rally in London on Saturday October 24th. Members of the Territorial Support Group, backed up by mounted police and aerial surveillance were deployed from 10am at the BNP's re-direction point near Euston (determined to prevent a repeat of Waterloo)

Station, and were still on duty eight hours later, protecting the actual venue in Great Smith St, Victoria from attack. The cost of the operation is estimated to run to six figures.

Despite gaining 20% of the vote in a recent by-election, the BNP are clearly frustrated at their inability to break out of their semi-twilight world. Their 1992 rally which had been described

in their publications as "the most important event of the year" was for the first time publicly advertised. The expectation was that the numbers attending would thereby increase.

In 1991 the rally was attended by just under 500. Encouraged by the high profile given to their counter-parts in W. Germany, they would have with some confidence expected to add considerably to that number this year.

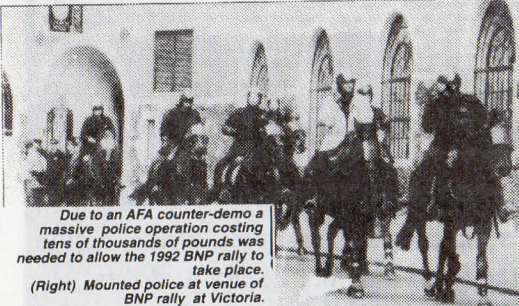
Anti-Fascist Action called a counter-demonstration at the assembly point an hour before the fascists were invited to assemble, which caused precisely the opposite to happen. Clearly the police were not the only ones to anticipate trouble as less than 300 right-wingers attended. Nor were the right-wingers the only ones to get cold feet. Neither the Anti-Nazi League, or the Anti-Racist Alliance who had both been invited produced any visible presence. This was a repeat performance of Waterloo where AFA reportedly said they did not attend because "AFA could not guarantee our personal safety". On the anniversary of its launch many people including its own supporters must now be asking what if any is the legitimate reason for ARA (and indeed the

For militant supporters of Fascist Action on the other hand, the demonstration Euston began the way the day at Waterloo had ended with a rally hundreds of them imprisoned for hours within police corridors.

INSIDE Interview with Republican Pow

'The Politics of Malcolm X'

Codename: Operation Blackshirt



Due to an AFA counter-demo a massive police operation costing tens of thousands of pounds was needed to allow the 1992 BNP rally to take place. (Right) Mounted police at venue of BNP rally at Victoria.

A similar 'success' of the ANL was the battering of fascists at the end of Brick Lane in September 1993, which they also listed in their carnival programme. The reality was that the ANL/SWP were on the opposite side of the road to where the fascists sold papers with no plans to 'take the fascists' pitch.'

It was only through the intervention of stewards from Youth Against Racism in Europe (YRE), members of the 121 centre in Brixton, South West London Anti-Fascist Association and the Colin Roach Centre that a direct attack was made. By marching down the road and posing as fascists, this group were allowed by the police to enter the area occupied by the fascists. In the fight that followed, the fascists were chased in different directions. At this point, and it shouldn't be forgotten that there were very few fascists compared to a few hundred anti-fascists, some members of the ANL/SWP did join in the fighting.

Afterwards those who had been most involved in the fighting left the area and this allowed the ANL with their placards to present to the media and television an inaccurate version of events. Whilst this publicity may have attracted some people to their organisation, it did not help in the struggle against fascism.

In actual fact the loss of the paper sale at the end of Brick Lane was not especially important, except symbolically, to the fascists. They have been able to use the extra time for leafleting and canvassing on the doors of local people.

BNP electoral success

Events at Brick Lane followed the BNP's success in the Isle of Dogs by-election when Derek Beackon was elected local councillor. After a walk-out council workers were persuaded by their national and local leadership to return to work. 'Council workers against the Nazi's' could not organise strike action independent of the bureaucracy and did not attempt to do so.



Face of the far-Right: BNP supporters celebrate their candidate's capture of the party's first council seat

Votes, fists and boots for the BNP

FIST and boot ruled on the Isle of Dogs hours before the last vote was counted.

An 80-strong mob of chanting British National Party supporters broke away from police, hunting the streets for their enemy, the Anti-Nazi League.

A chorus of Rule Britannia echoed as the mob turned a corner to find their first white victim sprawling by a car. Unable to escape, he was beaten to the ground and left crumpled on the street, a broken and bloody mess.

The mob, led by a skinhead with a tattoo across his face, cheered as they turned, looking for new prey. Breaking into a run, they darted down alleyways as police vans arrived.

They had congregated outside a pub when they spotted a Channel 4 TV crew. Reporter Alex Thompson and his team had been following the mob's exploits, when suddenly the venom was turned on them.

The reporter, who only weeks ago reported from the Bosnian front line, was lucky to escape

by NIGEL MORRIS

as the mob chased the crew up the street. Another deafening chorus of Rule Britannia erupted. Police vans swooped and the mob split up, using the tactics of football hooligans to escape.

Yards away, the Anti-Nazi League was being kept from the main BNP contingent by a line of police just outside Jack Bush House.

They challenged reporters who managed to reach them, fearing them to be BNP sympathisers. But their attentions quickly changed as a milk bottle flew over a wall, smashing among them. A 15-year-old BNP supporter was throwing the missiles. He was joined by others.

Panic gripped the ANL as police with riot shields threw a cordon around them. One ANL supporter tried to break through the ranks, but was held by an officer who said: "I'm trying to save you, don't get in my way."

In the police line, a black officer stood impassively as BNP supporters chanted: "Nigger, nigger, nigger out, out, out," aiming Nazi salutes at the officer.

A black photographer had to cope with similar taunts.

Scarves and sunglasses masked the identity of many of the BNP supporters.

Minutes before leader Derek Beackon emerged with news of the BNP's victory, police riot lines had closed in, trapping photographers, journalists and BNP supporters in a small pocket against a wall.

Officers tried to break up the celebration.



Police guard for the victorious Derek Beackon

was arrested by a snatch squad as the police tried to break up the BNP crowd. For a few tense moments the mob was on the verge of taking out its anger on the police.

Beackon was packed in a hired van on his way to the council headquarters.

The ANL/SWP had canvassed on behalf of the local Labour Party candidate. This is a long standing tradition in seats where the fascists have stood candidates. This is, in spite, of the refusal of the Labour Party and the bureaucracy of the trade union movement to formally back the ANL. Preference is given to support for ARA, which was re-launched at the end of 1994.

The ANL, as a broad front, may have difficulties in espousing a revolutionary position towards the Labour Party but the SWP should not have the same problems. However, it is caught with having to consistently campaign for a vote for Labour as it is unwilling to oppose Labour at the polls with a candidate of revolutionary views and ideas.

Some members in the ANL may also have difficulty in rallying behind an increasingly bankrupt Labour Party. However, they cannot hope to alter either organisations approach. The ANL's absence of democracy means that few local branches exist, meetings are irregular and members are not in a position to elect the chair or secretary. The area organisers are picked by the leaders of the ANL, who selected themselves. In many respects the structure of the ANL mirrors that of the BNP, with a self-appointed and elitist leadership.

'UNITY' demo shambles

The largest activity organised by the ANL, outside of the 1994 Carnival, was the 'UNITY' demonstration with the YRE in October 1993. Around 40,000 people took part, many young people bolstered by the ANL/SWP's and YRE/Militant's claim that they aimed to 'Close Down the BNP.' This was a reference to their headquarters in Welling, which had opened as a 'bookshop' in 1990. Until the demo the main activity to close it down consisted of ANL attempts to pressurise Tory controlled Bexley council to shut it down because the fascists had broken planning permission in its construction. Countless lobbies and

pickets of council meetings had failed. Today a Labour administration is taking the BNP to court and relying on the state to close it down. It remains open, although the Environment Secretary announced on July 16th 1995 that it must close at the end of 1995.

The march in 1993 was a shambles, demonstrators were funnelled into a narrow roadway with a brick wall or bank over ten feet tall on one side and a set of spiked railings leading to a 20 foot drop on the other side. No attempt was made by the organisers to actually organise such a large group of people into taking different routes to the BNP's headquarters and actually attack it.

When the march entered a residential area it approached the nearest point to the BNP's headquarters - a mere two miles away! The route was blocked by the police and demonstrators were asked to move in the pre-arranged direction. This was blocked by the police. Some members of the crowd began to throw placards and the more adventurous pulled down parts of a cemetery wall and chucked bricks at the police lines. Few covered their faces, a mistake which helped police arrest people afterwards.

Relatively few police officers stood at the front and took a bit of a hammering. Meanwhile hundreds of officers sat in their buses a few hundred yards from the 'riot.' Information from inside the police itself confirmed that they never really feared that the demonstrators would break through.

Afterwards, the arguments which were publicly debated on television and in the press concentrated on who had been responsible for the violence. It was important to the ANL that the police were seen to be responsible. It meant that they didn't have to risk alienating their Labour Party and media supporters by being forced to state that the police are fair game for a good hiding at any time - whether or not they are responsible for starting it.

But the debate also allowed the ANL, and to a lesser extent, the YRE and Militant to escape criticism for their actions. Having mobilised thousands of people, they had then herded them into a dangerous location blocked on all sides and open to police provocation. Confrontation with the police occurred at the exact spot where the police had planned. The organisers never had any tactics which aimed to get close to the BNP headquarters. Astonishingly the ANL and YRE have tried to present the October 1993 'UNITY' demo as a success.

On the day itself the fascists did turn up, but were forced to see out the day at a pub surrounded by police protecting them from AFA. At no time were people on the demonstration told that fascists were less than a mile or so away.

No role

Since the London local elections of 1994, the ANL has been unable to find a role for itself. With few elections to contest, the BNP have been less active on the streets and the ANL's main role of canvassing for Labour hasn't been required. The ANL have largely ignored the growth of Combat 18, because it doesn't have the street fighting organisers to physically oppose them..

ANL activities have dropped, SWP members are now more likely to turn up with SWP placards. In addition, as in the early 1980s the SWP leadership appears to have decided to promote the view that the best way of fighting fascism is through workers struggling together for better wages and conditions. It is time to return to the trade union struggle.

However there are no signs that organised fascism has grown weaker. Racism has become increasingly respectable. A lull in fascist activities in the early part of 1995 could have given the opportunity to analyse what has been happening, to re-assess

tactics and plan new strategies for the future. The ANL and the SWP have not done any of this.

The period could also have been used to discuss what may happen under a Labour Government. The NF grew massively under the 1974 to 1979 Labour Government and despite Blair's attempts to demonstrate his complete subservience to the City and big business he still can only get elected if people feel they will be better off under Labour than under the Tories. What happens when they are not? Unable to turn to the Tories the racism and 'radicalism' of the BNP could prove a pole of attraction. Young white working class people also remain disorganised and remain a recruiting ground for the fascists.

Although between 1977 and 1982 the ANL were a vital component of the struggle against fascism and racism this has clearly not been the case with ANL mark 2. It has misled many of the struggle against fascism, most of which we have not had the space to analyse. It has offered passivity in place of active resistance, set up an undemocratic anti-fascist organisation with decisions taken by self-appointed leaders, has proved itself incapable of understanding fresh developments within the fascist movement, has been content to cling 'to the coat-tails' of a Labour Party moving swiftly to the right, and it has placed participants in danger of attack by turning out on street activities without any plan for self-defence or physical resistance to the fascists.

Building an alternative

Anti-fascists who are serious about the struggle ahead must seek to build an alternative to the ANL/SWP. The Colin Roach Centre is seeking to work with other organisations, outside of the ANL to create a 'UNITY' group in our local area. We have adopted a programme based on the following principles:-

- ◆ Support for self-defence against racist and fascist attacks.
- ◆ No platform for fascists, whereby they are denied any opportunity to promote the ideals of fascism
- ◆ Opposing fascism ideologically and physically.
- ◆ Recognition that the unity of all the communities under attack from racism and fascism - black and ethnic minority peoples, refugees, gypsies, disabled people, lesbians and gay men - together with the working class as a whole, has the numbers, consistent objective interest, understanding and fighting capability to smash fascism and racism.
- ◆ Recognition that the fight against racism, anti-semitism, sexism, homophobia and every kind of bigotry and oppression is essential to the defeat of fascism.
- ◆ Therefore we support the principle of a united front of workers organisations and the organisations of all communities under attack from racism and fascism, uniting the maximum number of people around the above principles in a struggle against fascism.

A public meeting in the Kings Cross area of London will launch the grouping on September 8th.

Locally, there is concern that the up and coming General Election will reveal considerable electoral support for the fascists. There is a possibility that in Tower Hamlets and Newham the BNP will emerge as the second party, behind Labour, but in front of the Tories and Liberals.

In Tower Hamlets, the Labour Party won the large majority of seats at the local elections in May 1994. Little has changed, recent figures have shown that discrimination in housing allocation for Bengali's has increased, racial attacks from racists, fascists and the Metropolitan Police are continuing and Labour is cutting back on local Government jobs and services. None of this will end with the election of a Labour Government.

In the 1990's a challenge to the BNP means challenging Labour. As an organisation the latter is committed to administering the capitalist system, the BNP is using this to portray themselves as 'radicals' and it is gaining them a large degree of support amongst a white population of east London, brought up on a tradition of imperialism and racism. Standing candidates against Labour can provide a focus for people wishing to challenge the system, more importantly active resistance to Labour will provide a focus for black people who want an alternative and may create a pole of attraction for white people who have been badly let down by the labour party and who have turned, wrongly, to the BNP as a 'radical' alternative.

However, this can only be one part of the struggle. There is the need to create, from amongst those people who want an alternative to poor housing, run-down services and low paid jobs, an organisation which promotes and fights for genuine change. This must be led and controlled not by the ex-students of the SWP but by the workers and unemployed people who live in the area. Ultimately, this means a challenge to the capitalist system itself and bringing about its destruction.

In fighting for this there will be created a new working class agenda, based on people's need and not profit. This task will not be easy, but neither is it impossible. Let's get on with it!

The Colin Roach Centre and anti-fascism

In Hackney, the Colin Roach Centre, is widely respected amongst all sections of the community for its practical and political work. Membership is increasing, and our range of work with other organisations is creating effective alliances and actions. Over the years, the centre has been actively involved in the struggle against fascism and racism.

This has included, physically challenging the fascists. On April 30th 1994 we held a rally, along with other groups, on the spot where fascists had been regularly leafleting during the Tower Hamlets local Government elections. This was the only direct physical challenge to them during the election period. The fascists were unable to take 'their pitch.' On election night itself a small group of people were able to confront the fascists and drive them away from the area. (see cutting) Both incidents were condemned by the ANL.

Our anti-fascist work has often been at the request of other organisations, such as Newham Monitoring Project. Whilst this will continue, at the end of 1995 we are confident we can now play a much more effective role in the anti-fascist fight by working with others to create a democratic, militant anti-fascist organisation. If you're interested then let us know.

Nazis scatter at York Hall

At the Tower Hamlets election count at York Hall, Bethnal Green, on 5 May, we saw an Anti-Nazi League demonstration that was poorly attended and seemed even more weak and passive than usual.

As militant anti-fascists reached the area, it soon became clear that those on the demonstration has no strategy to stop the fascists coming in and out of the area.

Armed with extremely flimsy placards, the ANL were happy to stay "safely" behind two rows of barriers, where the police had put them, and shout "police protect the fascists" to their hearts content.

Meanwhile, on the positive side, small groups of combative anti-fascists remained outside the police cordons for most of the evening and were able to intercept a group of more than 20 fascists who came steaming into

Cambridge Heath Road to confront the demonstration.

They lasted just seconds, most running straight back to where they had just come from – down Roman Road. At least one ended up needing hospital treatment.

The events of the evening showed that it is still possible, despite a large police presence, to "no platform" the fascists if smallish groups work closely together on the street.

This isn't squadism – it's just recognition that unless stewarding is taken seriously, people on our side will get hurt and not come again to an anti-fascist mobilisation.

It has to be said that most of the ANLers stayed behind police lines because they didn't feel safe straying out of the immediate area, not because it was a good place to demonstrate.

As Anti-Fascist Action often proved (and sometimes still do), it's no good doing anything unless you've got the confidence that your side will win in a confrontation. Anything less is dishonest, dangerous and irresponsible.

Colin Roach Centre Bulletin - Summer 1994

The Colin Roach Centre

The Colin Roach Centre was set up in the Summer of 1992. It is an independent political centre which relies on members subscriptions and donations for its funding. It was set up by Hackney Trade Union Support Unit and Hackney Community Defence Association. These two organisations have established reputations for their work in the community and amongst rank and file trade unionists.

Colin Roach was a young black man shot dead in the foyer of Stoke Newington Police Station on January 12th 1983. Outraged local people demonstrated against Colin's death. The police repounded by trying to beat protestors off the streets. A community campaign linked up different communities, political parties, trade unionists and campaigning organisations. In naming the centre after Colin Roach we commemorate his life and affirm our determination to continue the struggle for justice.

During the three years of its existence, the Colin Roach Centre has opposed police attacks against our communities, taken up workers campaigns, organised the Hackney Lesbian and Gay Pride Festival, been a part of the east London tradition of militant anti-fascism, opposed corruption in Hackney Council, supported the Irish Republican Movement, organised delegations to Turkey and Kurdistan and provided facilities to many trade unionists and community campaigns.

Resistance

Members of the Colin Roach Centre are currently discussing ways of setting up a new organisation, based on practical and political work. It is proposed to launch this in early October, when a list of policies will also be published. We intend to call the new organisation, Resistance, as we believe that this is the political stage we currently occupy. It is proposed to set up local branches in different areas across London and later throughout the country. If you are interested in becoming a member then please let us know.



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